

CDC Environmental Health Nexus Newsletter

Healthy Environment, Healthy You

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CDC Environmental Health Nexus Webinar: Protecting Yourself from Mold: Myths & Facts

Learn how to protect yourself and safely clean up mold after a flood or hurricane. CDC's Environmental Health Nexus recently hosted a webinar: Protecting Yourself from Mold: Myths & Facts.

CDC's subject matter experts Ginger Chew and Scott Damon from the National Center for Environmental Health and Amel Omari from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health discussed strategies on how to keep you and your community safe from mold exposure, clean up methods, and respirator usage during mold remediation.

This webinar was broadcast on Wednesday, June 22. You can access the webinar recording [here](#) .

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The Presenters for the Webinar:





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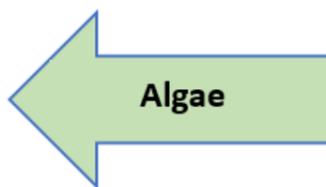
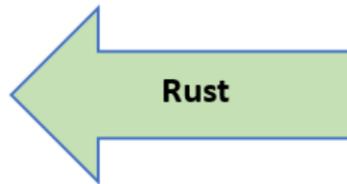
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There is always some mold around. Molds have been on the Earth for millions of years. Molds are part of the natural environment and can be found everywhere—indoors and outdoors. Mold can get in your home through open doors, windows, vents, and heating and air conditioning systems. Also, mold in the air outside can be brought indoors on clothing, shoes, bags, and even pets.

Mold is not usually a problem unless it begins growing indoors. **The best way to control mold growth is to control moisture.** [Mold grows where there is moisture](#), usually within 24–48 hours of flooding. Even if it is not visible, it is often present.

Moisture is commonly found around leaks in roofs, windows, pipes, or where there has been a flood. Mold grows on paper, cardboard, ceiling tiles, and wood. Mold can also grow in dust, paints, wallpaper, insulation, drywall, carpet, fabric, and upholstery.

Signs of moisture can look like any of the following:



Mold: What You Need to Know to Reduce Your Risk

[Molds have the potential to cause health problems](#) because they produce allergens, substances that can cause allergic reactions and irritants. Inhaling or touching mold or mold spores may cause allergic reactions in sensitive individuals. Allergic reactions to mold are common. They can be immediate or delayed.

Molds can also cause asthma attacks in some people with [asthma](#). In addition, mold exposure can irritate the eyes, skin, nose, throat, and lungs of both mold-allergic and non-allergic people.

All types of molds are considered fungi. People, especially those with weakened immune systems, can develop invasive mold infections days to weeks after exposure to fungi that live in the environment. People with weakened immune systems can become sick with invasive [mold infections after hurricanes or floods](#).

Immune-compromised people and people with chronic lung disease may get infections in their lungs from mold. After a flood, physicians should keep invasive mold infections in mind when treating people who are sick after exposure to mold. Signs and symptoms can vary depending on the patient, the type of mold, and the part of the body affected, but often include the following:

- Fever
- Cough
- Night sweats
- Weight loss
- Shortness of breath
- Sinus symptoms

- Dark scabs, blisters, or ulcers on the skin

Reduce Your Exposure to Mold in Your Home

After a hurricane or major flood, you may have to live in a home with mold in it. This could last for weeks, if you have nowhere else to go, or even months, if your whole community was affected. If you must stay in a moldy home, you need to take [steps to reduce your exposure to mold](#).

Mold can look like spots. It can be many different colors, and it can smell musty. If you see or smell mold, you should remove it. You do not need to know the type of mold.

If mold is growing in your home, you need to clean up the mold and fix the moisture problem. Mold can be removed from hard surfaces with household products, soap and water, or a bleach solution of no more than 1 cup of household laundry bleach in 1 gallon of water.

View these tips from CDC [if you use bleach to clean up mold](#).

CDC does not recommend mold testing. The health effects of mold can be different for different people, so you cannot rely on sampling and culturing to know if you or a member of your family might become sick. The best thing you can do is to safely remove the mold and work to prevent future mold growth. No matter what type of mold is present, you need to remove it.

What to Wear Before Entering a Home or Building with Mold Damage

- Goggles or eye protection
- N-95 respirator or one that provides even more protection (check packaging for "N-95")
- Long-sleeved shirt
- Protective gloves
- Long pants
- Waterproof boots

CAUTION!

If you have a breathing problem like asthma, do not enter a building with mold damage. Mold can make asthma symptoms worse.

If you have a weakened immune system (such as from cancer treatment or medicines that suppress the immune system), do not enter a building with mold damage. People with a weakened immune system are more likely to get a serious illness from mold.

Children should also not enter buildings with mold damage.

8 TIPS TO CLEAN UP MOLD



Protect Yourself

Put on personal protective equipment (gloves, mask, goggles) to protect your eyes, nose, mouth, and skin.



Toss!

Take it out! Anything that was wet with flood water and can't be cleaned and dried completely within 24 to 48 hours should be taken outside. Take photos of discarded items for filing insurance claims.



Air it out

Open all doors and windows when you are working, and leave as many open as you safely can when you leave.



Circulate

When electricity is safe to use, use fans and dehumidifiers to remove moisture.



Don't mix cleaners

If you use cleaning products, do not mix cleaning products together. **DO NOT** mix bleach and ammonia because it can create toxic vapors.



Scrub surfaces

Clean with water and a detergent. Remove all mold you can see. Dry right away.



Don't cover it, remove it

Painting or caulking over mold will not prevent mold from growing. Fix the water problem completely and clean up all the mold before you paint or caulk.



Dry it up

Dry your home and everything in it as quickly as possible – within 24 to 48 hours if you can.

<http://www.cdc.gov/mold/cleanup.htm>



Additional Resources to Protect Yourself and Others from Mold Exposure

Below are useful resources to educate and prepare yourself and your family.

- [Facts About Stachybotrys Chartarum – a Greenish-black Mold](#)
- [Hurricane-Associated Mold Exposures Among Patients at Risk for Invasive Mold Infections After Hurricane Harvey — Houston, Texas, 2017](#)
- [Dampness and Mold in Buildings](#)
- [Homeowner's and Renter's Guide to Mold Cleanup After Disasters](#)

Thank you for reading. Do not keep this great resource to yourself! Please share it with your colleagues and networks.

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